



**Texas House of Representatives
Committee on Higher Education
COVID-19 Pandemic, Request for Information
August 31, 2020**

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UT Dallas Response

The Committee seeks the following information related to the COVID-19 pandemic:

- 1. Are institutions of higher education ensuring the health and safety of students, faculty and staff during the 2020 Fall Semester? When applicable, please speak directly to classroom and lab settings, dormitories and dining halls.**

Commitment to the health, safety and well-being of all members of our University community is the foundation of UT Dallas' response to the COVID-19 pandemic, and choice is central to this commitment. UT Dallas allowed each faculty member to choose whether to teach in-person or virtually for the fall semester. Similarly, each student enrolled in a course with in-person meetings can choose to attend class in-person or asynchronously. These choices have contributed to the de-densification of the University campus for the fall semester and have allowed individuals to take steps to protect their health based on their individual circumstances. For those returning to campus, the University issued detailed guides for students, staff and faculty outlining expectations and protocols. These can be found at www.utdallas.edu/covid. All faculty, staff and students must complete a daily health check each day, whether or not they are coming to campus, to ensure accountability before entering campus. Face coverings are required on campus.

The University has invested significantly in campus and building entrance signage, which reminds all students, staff, faculty and visitors about social distancing and face covering requirements on campus, especially in buildings, classrooms, elevators and restrooms. UT Dallas has re-spaced all food and retail spaces on campus with directional signage for lines to ensure social distancing.

Classrooms have been reconfigured for safety. Diagrams for each classroom have been created and posted in each classroom to ensure all seating is in compliance with 6-ft social distancing. Signage has also been placed to designate entry/exit flow for classrooms. The University has

repurposed non-traditional room spaces on campus to allow for larger classrooms that adhere to social distancing requirements.

UT Dallas has purchased 30,000 disposable masks and 20,000 cloth masks for wide-scale distribution during the first few weeks of on-campus return of students, faculty and staff. Mask distribution stations have been erected throughout the heavy-traffic areas of campus as well as in the dining halls and residence halls.

The University has installed hand sanitizer stations near the entrance doors of all main buildings on campus and created a supply distribution process for faculty and staff to request cleaning supplies, hand sanitizer and masks. Teams have installed plexiglass shields at all major customer service desks with high traffic flows and in all dining facilities.

After initially shutting down on-campus research operations, the University has gradually re-opened labs and is now operating at 50% on-site capacity. All researchers who wish to work on campus are required to schedule time in the laboratories.

UT Dallas is working with Dallas Area Rapid Transit authorities to ensure all public transportation entering campus is sanitized after the completion of each route, and each bus is equipped with masks and hand sanitizer. Processes are also in place to ensure proper entry/exit flow and social distancing while riding.

All on-campus residential facilities have been converted to single occupancy bedrooms in an effort to de-densify the facilities. Protocols to ensure safety are consistent with CDC and ACUHO-I guidelines. Facilities have designated entrances and exits. Hand sanitation stations have been installed throughout the lobby of each facility as well as plexiglass shields at all front desks. Elevator occupancy has been adjusted based on social distancing guidelines. The University extended move-in over a period of two weeks in order to permit social distancing. Furniture in common areas has been reduced or eliminated. Each student has been given masks and hand sanitizer.

Also, the University has set aside approximately 100 isolation/quarantine units that can be assigned if necessary. Procedures for reporting exposure and/or positive cases have been implemented. Contact tracing measures have also been identified.

2. What plans are in place for on-campus COVID-19 testing? Do institutions have the capacity to provide testing on campus, both in terms of available supplies and labs to process tests?

COVID-19 testing for symptomatic students will be offered by appointment through the Student Health Center (SHC). SHC staff will take samples from the students and will then send the samples to UT Southwestern for processing in their diagnostic laboratories. UT Dallas does not have any capacity to perform tests independently on campus. Both the supplies and test processing are being provided by UT Southwestern. UT Dallas employees who have been on campus within the past 7 days and are exhibiting COVID-19 symptoms will be offered testing

through UT Southwestern's drive-up testing facility or asked to test with their healthcare provider.

3. If applicable, what are plans for collegiate athletics this Fall? How will student athletes be kept safe? If fans will be permitted to attend events, how will fans be kept safe?

The Comets will not compete in fall sports in 2020. The NCAA has cancelled all fall championships for Division III, which includes men's and women's cross country, men's and women's soccer and volleyball. The American Southwest Conference recently voted to officially move men's and women's soccer and volleyball to spring 2021. At this time, the conference has not formally made decisions regarding men's and women's basketball. A decision is expected mid to late September.

4. What do projected enrollment figures and formula funding look like to institutions for this school year?

As of the submission of this document, projected fall enrollment overall will be down approximately 3%. Because of the nature of the enrollment decline in incoming freshmen and new master's students, weighted formula hours will decline in some areas. The impact of a smaller incoming freshmen class is small compared to the effect of the decline in new master's students in engineering, the sciences, and management.

5. Has there been a noticeable impact on staff or faculty retention with regard to concerns about the pandemic?

In general, faculty have been appreciative of the flexible model of instruction that UT Dallas has adopted for this fall 2020 semester. Instructors were given the choice to teach their courses using one or more of five modalities of instruction, including traditional classroom, blended/hybrid, flexible, remote/virtual, and online. In turn, students were able to choose their preferred learning modalities from among the available options. A few faculty members expressed that their decision to retire this summer coincided with the pandemic, but overall the number of faculty members who resigned or retired from UT Dallas during the 2019-2020 academic year, ending August 31, was similar to that from the previous year. In addition, two individuals who were going to join the UT Dallas faculty this fall changed their minds due to complications caused by the pandemic.

Non-essential staff have been provided the opportunity to work remotely during the pandemic, which has promoted retention. This has been appreciated. Essential staff with positions that physically relate to students, public safety, or campus operations have continued to work on campus. A reduction in the University's budget for FY 2021, in part due to the pandemic, has resulted in a reduction in force.

6. Health Related Institutions were exempt from the 5% budget cuts earlier this year, due to their important role in resolving the public health crisis. What are some of the programs, research, and responses to the pandemic that our Health Related Institutions have contributed? (N/A)

7. How have state and federal COVID-related funds already impacted budgets?

UT Dallas received approximately \$9.5M in federal CARES Act funding to support institutional operations. Outstanding orders in the amount of \$800,000 have been placed for classroom technology enhancements and distance education delivery. In addition, \$3.2M is earmarked to offset auxiliary operations refunds made to students in the spring 2020 semester. UT Dallas has reserved \$1M for additional student support, if needed. The remaining \$4.5M will be allocated as the University begins the fall semester and gains a better understanding of the COVID-19 related expenses and can confirm their eligibility for CARES Act funding.

8. How has the pandemic affected the overall financial status of small and rural community colleges? (N/A)

9. Does your institution have a public, online dashboard for the reporting of positive COVID-19 cases which is updated daily? If so, what is the link to the dashboard?

Yes. www.utdallas.edu/covid/response/confirmed-cases/